COMMONWEALTH MYCOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
KEW, SURREY

COLONY OF SEYCHELLES

ABBREVIATED ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOR THE YEAR

1944

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His Excellency the Governor.

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1945.

SEYCHELLES.

Report of the Department of Agriculture for the year ended 31st December, 1944.

SECTION I. AGRICULTURE IN THE COLONY.

Meteorology.

Weather. The rainfall recorded at the Port Office was 59 inches. This figure is about 20 inches below the average the past 20 years. This is the third consecutive year in ch the rainfall has been well below the average.

Vegetation has suffered considerably and in some districts as not possible to obtain water and fodder for animals.

An unusual gale was experienced early in April and this followed by another one in the latter half of May. The d velocity of these gales rose to about 45 miles per hour they caused considerable damage to trees in the Town area, banana and other plantations in several parts of Mahé.

Agricultural Industries.

1. Coconuts. The quantity of copra exported during the was 6,945½ tons having a value of Rs. 1,598,208. These es compare with 4,508½ tons valued at Rs. 902,823 43. This year's export of copra includes the production e last two months of 1943 and this in part accounts for rge quantity of copra exported.

Many estates on the granitic islands produced an excep- lly large crop of coconuts, but it is probable that the for 1945 will fall below the 1944 level. The Ministry of was the sole buyer of the Colony's copra exports.

The local selling price of copra was Rs. 218 per ton at the ning of the year. The Ministry of Food increased the in May and this brought the local selling price up to 52 which was maintained for the remainder of the year.

The average for the year was approximately Rs. 239 per to
The local selling price of coconuts rose from Rs. 26 to Rs.
per thousand with an average for the year of Rs. 29.

Chrysomphalus ficus (bernique noire) reappeared
isolated areas in La Digue and Felicité islands, but t
predator (Chilocorus nigritus) was soon able to control the
outbreaks. Melittomma continued to be a serious pest in so
of the granitic Islands especially Mahé and Praslin

The quality of copra exported was maintained at a hi
Standard.

2. *Essential Oils.* The following table gives the quantit
and values of essential oils exported during 1944 :—

	Quantity.	Value.
Cinnamon leaf oil	Kgs. 45,497	Rs. 245,10
Patchouli Oil	„ 1,559	„ 68,19

The quantity of cinnamon leaf oil exported during
year was about 2 tons less than the figure for 1943, which
then the lowest on record since 1926. The low production
mainly due to a shortage of labour.

The local price of cinnamon leaf oil fluctuated betw
Rs. 4.92 and Rs. 5.90 per kilo. with an average of Rs. 5.40
kilo. for the year.

The reduced production of cinnamon leaf oil during
past 3 years has enabled the cinnamon to strengthen itsel
many over-cropped areas especially in North Mahé.

The price of cinnamon bark remained at a high le
and 480 tons valued at Rs. 164,336 were exported. Most
the bark went to the United Kingdom.

Patchouli Oil. There was a strong demand for this
and the local selling price increased from Rs. 30 per kilo.
the beginning of the year to Rs. 60 per kilo. at the end of
year. The unusually strong demand was due to the lack
supplies from other countries which are still under ene
occupation.

The reduced quantity of oil exported was caused
drought which seriously reduced yields. A great dea
interest is being shown in the cultivation of this crop.

Central Distillery. The following table gives the qua

s of material distilled and the number of hours that the l worked during the year :—

Material.	Quantity.	No. of hours.
Patchouli	Kgs. 19,340	1,883
Cinnamon leaves	„ 56,538	1,104
Cinnamon bark	„ 500	11
Peppermint	„ 79	6
Eucalyptus staigeriana	708	16

3. Vanilla. The quantity of vanilla exported was 2,953 os. with a value of Rs. 93,112 compared with 3,454 os. valued at Rs. 102,903 exported during 1943. The al selling price of vanilla remained fairly steady during the ar at Rs. 24 per kilo.

Most of the vanilla is produced in Praslin and there the nfall was lower than in Mahé. The dry weather prevented e normal development of the pods and thereby caused a duction in the yield. Few flowers were produced so the nilla crop next year will be a poor one.

4. Food Production. The shortage of labour again ndicapped the cultivation of foodcrops and a low rainfall in ny areas reduced yields.

The production of foodcrops on Government Estates was nost as high as in the previous year in spite of the fact that veral acres had to be planted in cover crops and sugar cane a rotation. The Cabbage crop was severely attacked by lack rot" causative agent *Bacterium campestre*. The margins the leaves blacken and the veins show a dark brown discolora-n ; this is followed by a soft rot of the stem and head. The ter may drop off or become soft and watery with an offensive ell. Young plants may be attacked and killed, but if ection occurs late in growth, the disease may not do exten-e damage. In wet weather it may be necessery to harvest plants before they are full grown.

The quality of the "Lisbon" yams which were introduced ew years ago is excellent and they are liked by all sections the community. The Department has distributed large mbers of cuttings but only a few planters have succeeded h the cultivation of this crop. Failures by many people e been caused by poor cultivation and a lack of rain. This

has been unfortunate as it is a crop that yields well wh conditions are favourable to its growth. In addition to t the tubers can be kept for 6 to 9 monts in excellent conditi

The sandy plateaux on Government Estates have be used to a large extent for the production of vegetables. It been found that the best results can only be obtained if soil is well covered with mulch which prevents the ra drying of the very porous soil. Mulch however encourages ravages of snails which have proved to be the most seri pest in the cultivation of vegetables. "Meta" solid fuel i most efficacious poison for snails and for this purpose half ounce of the powdered "Meta" is mixed with 1 lb of moisten maize bran. The Department was able to get a small quant of "Meta" at the end of the year and a further quantity h been ordered.

The Department imported vegetable seeds in bulk a retailed them to the public.

The crushing of imported maize was continued and t maize mill was kept fully occupied during the year.

SECTION II. WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT.

1. Estates under departmental control. Union Vale esta of 245 acres and Bel Etang estate of 75 acres were bought Government during the year and the Department underto their management. These estates are situated on the ou skirts of the town and Union Vale will be developed as dairy farm for the supply of milk in the town area ; the B Etang estate will probably be used for educational purpose Negotiations for the purchase of Rose Belle estate of abo 160 acres at La Misère were started at the end of the year.

The Department continued to work the Grand An estates as a commercial undertaking and the balance sheet w be published in the Government Gazette.

The cultivation of foodcrops during the war on the Gra Anse estates has emphasized the need for irrigation a terracing on the hillsides. A scheme to terrace and irrigate portion of these estates was submitted to the Secretary State who was able to send Mr. D. Sturdy, O. B. E., a Seni Agricultural Officer from Tanganyika to give advice on t work. During Mr. Sturdy's visit of about six weeks, he w fully occupied in visiting estates and inspecting the areas

e terraced and irrigated. Mr. Sturdy submitted a report on is visit and his advice was greatly appreciated by the Department.

A scheme to terrace 500 acres and to irrigate 250 acres on he Grand Anse estates has been submitted and it is hoped hat a free grant of money will be obtained from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to finance the work.

In the opinion of the Department it is essential that xperience should be obtained in the intensive cultivation of erraces on the middle slopes of the granitic islands as coconuts n many hillside areas are gradually becoming unproductive s a result of attacks by Melittomma and diminishing fertility f the soil due to erosion. The sub-soil on the hillsides which s produced from weathered granite is tighly compacted and is lmost impervious to water and plant roots. Terracing there- ore seems to be the only method of dealing with these areas s it will serve the two-fold purpose of loosening the sub-soil nd preventing loss of soil by erosion.

The problem of maintaining soil fertility on the terraced lopes is one which will have to be tackled scientifically and t is proposed to follow the lead of other countries in this natter.

A pasture can, under careful management, be as effective s a forest in conserving the soil and maintaining its fertility. For improving soil structure, a grass has a considerable advar- tage over other forms of vegetation in the fineness of its root system and the frequency with which its root system gets renewed. Uganda has adopted Elephant grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) as a means of restoring the condition of its soils. This grass is easily propagated and established in this Colony, and it should be possible to devise a rotation of crops which will include a grass fallow. Other grasses such as Guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*), *Paspalum sp.*, and Citronella grass (*Cymbopogon Nardus*) also grow well in the Colony and trials will have to be made to ascertain their respective restorative effects on our soils. Sugar cane thrives in the Colony and ex- periments in other countries have shown that from a normal crop of cane, about 10 tons of dry leaves are produced on an acre.

Thus it is proposed to develop a system of rotation which will include food crops, especially those which have high pro- tective and nutritive values, essential oil crops, sugar cane and grasses.

2. *Reafforestation.* Bracken fern and Gazon trail (*Paspalum brevifolium*) were kept under control in the areas in which young seedlings were growing, but a shortage of labour prevented the planting of further areas on Crown Lands. An application has been made for a free grant of money from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to finance the reafforestation of large areas of recently acquired Crown Lands and for the replacement of cinnamon in other areas with valuable timber trees.

The reafforestation of water catchment areas on privately owned estates was considered by the Agricultural Board and it was agreed that the afforestation of catchment areas in the Colony should be undertaken with the help of Government. Although the afforestation of some catchment areas should be undertaken with as little delay as possible the Board appreciated that the shortage of labour would prevent an early start from being made on this work.

3. *Botanical and Town Gardens and Experimental Plots.* The Gardens were maintained in good order and the experimental plots were used mainly for the propagation of recently imported varieties of pulse and other food crops.

4. *Livestock.* The locally bred Scindh Freisian crosses are giving satistactory results and it is now intended to import Freisian cattle from South Africa and Kenya and Scindi cattle from India in order to accelerate the breeding of these animals. This policy is based on experience which has been gained in similar West Indian Colonies. The milk yield of local cattle is very low and it should not be difficult to double the Colony's output of milk by replacing the existing animals with better ones.

European breeds of cattle degenerate fairly rapidly in the Colony and in future, importations of bulls should be undertaken at intervals of approximately 5 years.

In the past, insufficient attention has been paid to the raising of cattle in the Colony. An effective complemental use of livestock and crops is needed in the Colony, and the Department will be able to give a positive lead in this direction when the proposed development of the Government estates can be undertaken after the war.

The Jumnapari goats as well as their crosses with local goats continue to thrive at Anse Boileau.

The distribution of Rhode Island Red eggs was continued from the fowls which are kept at the Botanical Gardens.

5. Laboratory Investigations. One hundred and forty ee samples of fermentation were analysed for the Exc se partment and eleven samples of Patc ouli oil were analysed ore exportation. Fi teen samples of Copra were tested for isture content.

6. Fisheries and Guano. 1,440 kilos. of tortoise shell, ued at Rs. 26,000 were export d. Shipping was difficult to ain for guano shipments a d only 5,847 tons, valued at . 97,065 were exported.

SECTION III.

OMITTED.

SECTION IV. SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION AFFECTING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES.

Ordinance No. 8 of 1944. An Ordinance to impose a ar Tax on Bacca manufactured for sale.

Ordinance No. 9 of 1944. An Ordinance to amend the nufacture and control of Toddy Ordinance 1935 (Ordinance . 23 of 1935).

A. F. NICHOLS,
Director.

partment of Agricultural,
Seychelles, 25th July 1945.